

## Milwaukee ACEs Fly from STARBASE to Aviation Jobs at the Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport



The Aviation Careers Education (ACE) program is a summer employment and learning opportunity for high school students in Milwaukee Public Schools. ACE promotes aviation and aerospace education and provides students experiences in aviation-related jobs. It is the result of partnerships between industry, high schools and government. The Department of Defense's (DoD) STARBASE Wisconsin Academy is a part of the Milwaukee ACE Advisory Committee. This program is coordinated by the Wisconsin Department of Transportation's Bureau of Aeronautics.

Denee Harper and Xitlalic Castaneda-Cerda are STARBASE Wisconsin Alumni who attended the STEM program in 2013 as fifth grade students from Milwaukee Spanish Immersion School (MSIS). Learn more about these young women on pages 2 and 3 of this article. They are now participating in the ACE program this summer as interns. The internship opportunities at Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport accomplish the following:

- Encourage students to succeed in school by making classwork more meaningful.
- Give students experiences in aviation-related jobs, which help them realize that aviation careers are within their reach.
- Encourage youth to start planning their future, set career goals, and plan how they will get there.
- Promote collaboration with educators and schools in support of aviation initiatives.

All ACE youth become familiar with different aspects of airport operations and the aviation industry. They tour airport operations including the air traffic control tower, civilian operations, 128<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing, airport infrastructure, and take a flight in a small aircraft. To qualify as an ACE student, youth must be 16 years old and enrolled in Milwaukee Public Schools. Youth can participate in the program until the summer after their high school graduation.



For more information on the ACE Program, contact Meredith Alt, Aviation Education Program Manager, via email [meredithl.alt@dot.wi.gov](mailto:meredithl.alt@dot.wi.gov) or call her at (608) 266-8166. Program Website- <http://wisconsindot.gov/ace>

To learn more about the DoD STARBASE Academy in Wisconsin, visit <https://dma.wi.gov/DMA/starbase> or contact John Puttre, Director-STARBASE Wisconsin, via email at [jputtre@starbasewi.org](mailto:jputtre@starbasewi.org) or telephone at (414) 535-5786.



A Department of Defense Youth

## Denee Harper



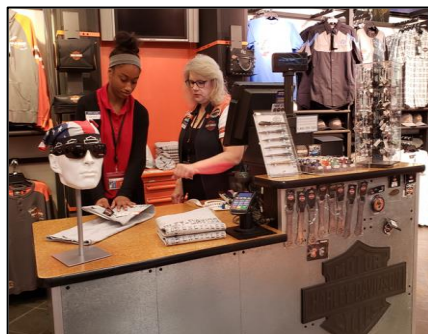
At MSIS, she participated in two aviation programs, STARBASE and Flight Link. Flight Link was an overnight stay and courses at the Experimental Aircraft Association's (EAA) Airventure Museum in Oshkosh. Denee explains that she was not interested in STEM prior to these two experiences. Her elementary school did not have an emphasis on Engineering and Technology programs in fifth grade beyond the standard math and science classes. Mrs. Fink, her fifth grade teacher at MSIS, fondly remembers her, noting, "Denee has always led by example through her actions and dedication to her studies. Denee is not afraid to take risks in learning new skills that will strengthen her future. She has a quiet, calm way of getting what she needs and avoiding peer pressure and drama to get it."

This interest and motivation enables her to try new things. She plans to attend a four-year college. Denee Harper is now a Senior at Ronald Reagan High School. She chose to enroll in Science elective courses such as Anatomy and Chemistry. Her LinkedIn profile identifies her as a future nurse with a specialty working in labor and delivery or operating rooms.

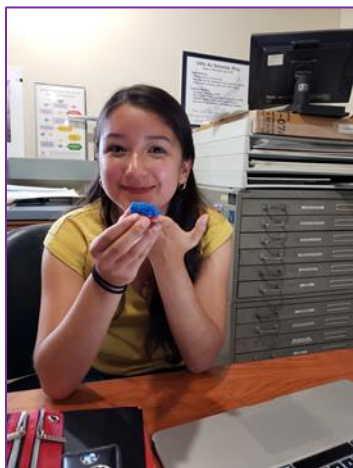
Her guidance counselor recommended and recruited her for the ACEs program during her Sophomore year. She is a student leader who volunteers her time as a Freshman Orientation Greeter, Science Fair Judge, and member of the National Junior Honor Society. As a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) Screener, she greeted and informed passengers of the screening process to expedite travelers in line. In 2018, she received a TSA Community Service Award for returning abandoned items and helping direct passengers. She works as a



Sales Associate for Mitchell's Paradies Lagardere Travel Retail Shops in 2019. Some of her favorite ACE activities are the tours of the airport including the 128<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing and air traffic control tower. Prior to her EAA Young Eagles Flight, she had not flown in an airplane. Interns flew over Milwaukee landmarks like Lake Michigan and Miller Park. Her advice to future ACE students: "Go out and do things that are out of your comfort zone. Because it will spike an interest for students. It will tell them what they don't want to do. It was worth a shot."



## Xitlalic Castaneda-Cerda



Xitlalic Castaneda-Cerda also attended STARBASE as a fifth-grade student with Mrs. Fink's MSIS class in 2013. Ms. Fink recalls that, "Xitlalic has never questioned her goals or lacked for motivation to make things happen for her success. She has always maintained focus on her academics with a ferociousness to exceed all expectations for herself. Xitlalic is a kind and insightful person who is an example to her peers." Xitlalic explains that the academy was helpful in focusing her interest in STEM career fields, noting, "As a Latina, female, and woman in this [STEM] industry, it [STARBASE] really opened my eyes to careers and really allowed me the opportunity to figure out what it is that I like."

She continued with STEM enrichment programs. At Wedgewood Middle School, she enrolled in Project Lead the Way Engineering Courses. She is now a Senior at Ronald Reagan High School. In Calculus Class, she enrolled in an Actuary Science Seminar at Northwestern Mutual to learn about Risk Management in the Insurance Industry. Xitlalic was recommended by an ACE Alumna to participate in the Milwaukee program.

Her 2019 ACE work assignment is with the 128<sup>th</sup> Air Refueling Wing Public Affairs Office at the Milwaukee Mitchell International Airport. She is currently developing flyers for a fundraiser using graphic arts software. Her favorite aviation activities include the leadership training and tour of the KC-135 aircraft. She looks forward to her Young Eagle's Flight and attending the EAA Fly-In in Oshkosh. It will be her first small aircraft flight.

This placement fits as her father is a Marine Veteran who served in Operation Desert Storm. She advocates for the military veterans through her affiliations with the Latino Veterans of Valor Foundation and American GI Forum. She advises future ACE students to "take what you learn and really appreciate your supervisors. Because at the end of the day, they want what is best for you and teach you about their industry. And, they teach you about daily routines that they do. So, you can figure out [for your future] what you like to do and don't like to do."



In her future, she plans to attend an in-state four-year college, potentially UW-Madison. She sees a lot of opportunities as a Latina in the STEM fields and prefers Bio-Medical Engineering. She is considering joining the Marines after college as an officer.